1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
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17. Alhassan—younger brother of Ndakó Tétengi. Lives with him on the farm.
18. Suleiman Maidunki—in Bida. His father was a *bara* of *Etsu* Umaru. He is a tailor by profession—*Maidunki* means tailor (in Hausa). Cf. No. 8.
19. Kolo Langbogu—on a farm near Wuya. He obtained his land through his patron.

The social significance of clientship reveals itself, finally, in the formation of political factions. Every man of rank and standing collects round him a smaller or larger group of followers, henchmen, and clients, their families, their sons, brothers, and friends, who come to look upon this man as their protector and patron. The people of rank themselves are organized similarly, on a higher plane: we have seen how they attach themselves to a royal prince from whom they expect favours, support, and, some of them, promotion to an important office or rich fief. Let me try to reduce to figures this manifold system of integration that is the result of patronage and clientship. The old *Shaba* of Bida (as our list shows) had still in the days of his waning influence nineteen *bara*. Then there were his sons and younger brothers with their *bara*—some forty men altogether (not counting women and children). Of the other nobility, members of the royal house of Umaru Majigi to which he himself belonged, and members of the *saraki* nobility bearing allegiance to this house, some eight or ten were attached to the old man in personal allegiance, each of them with his own *bara*, bringing the total to over a hundred. The number of peasants, commoners, small traders, and Mallams who, living in his neighbourhood or on one of his *tunga*, regarded themselves as his clients in a looser sense, I can only guess. In Bida itself their group included all the streets round his house, twenty to thirty houses, and the people from this group would come to the *Shaba* or any important member of his faction, whenever they were in need of advice or protection. The following of the *Shaba* must thus have amounted to over 400 men, a thousand if we count their whole families, in a town of 30,000.

What was said earlier in this chapter about the division of Bida into local factions or 'wards' is now fully explained. You can map out the whole of Bida in such areas of personal influence and patronage. Rivalry and feuds between the leaders of the local factions may throw the whole town, indeed the whole country, into a civil war. This is what happened not long ago. In 1931 the trial of a witch in Bida had deeply stirred the passions of the people. A certain woman in the *efu* of the *Sokyara*, a powerful nobleman, though not at the time in favour at the court, was believed to be a witch and was accused by the people of the *efu* of having caused several deaths and cases of mysterious illness. The people feeling themselves menaced by her presence appealed for help to their patron, the *Sokyara*, who decided to expel the woman from his *efu*. She appealed to the *Etsu* and the *Alkali*; summoned before the court, she swore on the Koran that she was innocent, whereupon the *Alkali* let her go and dismissed the case. This to the enraged people appeared as a farce. The anti-witchcraft society to which the people of Nupe for-

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merly used to entrust the discovery and punishment of witches had been forbidden some ten years previously. The modern method of obtaining protection against a witch, through the medium of the law courts, had evidently failed. Moreover, the people were aware of the enmity that existed between their patron and a powerful faction at the king's court, especially between the *Sokyara* and a certain favourite of the ruling *Etsu*, the *Uban Dawaki*, who had recently obtained his rank by what had seemed to many gross favouritism. The action of the *Alkali*, who was known to belong to the same faction, was supposed to be prompted by the wish to please the *Etsu*'s favourite and to discredit his rival. Enraged, and despairing of any other way out, the people took the law into their own hands and stoned the alleged witch and her daughters on their way home from the courthouse. Then the fight between the two factions flared up openly. Although certain members of the king's household had, as it was revealed later during the official investigation, taken part in the stoning of the witches, the *Etsu* accused the *Sokyara* and had him and his whole family arrested. The *Sokyara* and his brother managed to escape, and hid in their house. When this became known in the town the people of the *Uban Dawaki* faction thought this a good opportunity to deal the rival faction their death-blow. They set fire to the house of the *Sokyara*, who sought safety in flight while his brother died in the flames. Later the *Uban Dawaki* party tried to throw the blame on the *Sokyara* and accused him of having himself started the fire. Bida was in upheaval, the *Etsu* powerless, or pretending to be powerless, and only after the sternest measures could the government establish peace.

But we need not go to this extreme case to demonstrate the reality of this system of political factions.[1] Extend the 'circles within circles' of patronage and clientship wider and wider till they are bounded by the widest circumference—the three dynastic *ekpā*—and you understand their full import. Patronage and clientship are only small meshes in a texture which envelops the whole social life of the kingdom.

SOCIAL CLASS IN NUPE

The foregoing description has revealed a system of social gradation of remarkable thoroughness and indeed conspicuousness. We can speak of Nupe as a typical class society. But hitherto we have touched upon only one aspect of social stratification, namely, social differentiation so far as it results from differentiation in political rights and duties. We have studied social barriers—the barriers of rank and grade—where they are pivoted in the political structure. We have yet to learn the full extent of their influence upon the life of society at large and their relation to other trends of social stratification.

Social class is a complex phenomenon, the resultant of many factors,

[1] There is another hardly less drastic illustration: in April 1936 the same *Uban Dawaki* fell ill. At once rumour had it that he had been poisoned by the *Maiyaki*, an old enemy of his who was said to be jealous of the large following which the *Uban Dawaki*, though his junior in rank, could boast. That the medical officer diagnosed lung trouble did little to abate the rumour.

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put it, the '*Sagi* of the poor'; what the royal princesses do for the women of the nobility the *Sonya* does for the women of her own class: she advises them and arbitrates in their quarrels, taking, however, the more serious cases to the *Sagi*. The *Sonya* might almost be called a female officer of state. All large-scale women's work that is done in Bida by order of the king is organized and supervised by her—for example, the beating of the floors in the houses of the king and the royal nobility. The *Sonya* is, above all, entrusted with the supervision of the market. She is elected by the Bida women who are regular traders on the market, and her rank is confirmed by the *Etsu*. The respect and deference with which all Bida women greet their *Sonya* illustrates the importance of her position. Formerly she was a royal fief-holder on a small scale, holding land of her own; she was also allowed to levy a small due on all business transacted on the market. Of this levy the *Sonya* returned one-third to the *Sagi* or *Nimwoye* as a symbol of her submission to the highest authority of these royal princesses over the women of Bida. To-day, the *Sonya* is still supervising the market and the work of the women. She has kept her status and her official position as well: for she has been made an official of the Native Administration and granted a small salary.

In every Nupe village, finally, we find a titled 'head of the women', called *Sagi*, like the royal princess in Bida. She is usually a woman about or over 50. She is elected by the married women of the village and her appointment is confirmed by the chief. In larger villages there may be a *Shaba Sagi* as well, an appointed successor to the headship of the women. The title *Sagi* itself seems to be of comparatively recent origin and was probably, like many other village titles, copied from the Bida rank system. The original title which it replaced was *Lelu*. This title, though no longer used, was explained to me in most villages to be the exact equivalent of the modern title *Sagi*. Yet this is not quite true: with the change in the title a subtle change in the significance of the rank has taken place. As I have described elsewhere, the Nupe chiefs used to bestow the rank *Lelu* on the woman who was believed to be the most powerful witch in the village. Her secret knowledge could thus be made to benefit the interests of the community. Turned into an organ of village administration, this woman could be used, in the opinion of the people, to check and control the subversive activities of the other witches.[1] With regard to witchcraft, then, the Nupe have adopted the proverbial policy of making a (reformed) criminal chief of police, or rather an imaginary criminal controller of an imaginary crime. Their belief in the efficiency of this measure has not changed. Yet the curtailed power of the present-day village chief, who is no longer free to act upon the advice of his female 'controller of witchcraft'; the general fear in the country, born of the experiences in the witchcraft trial in 1932, even so much as to mention the word witch or witchcraft; and in certain places also the growing importance of other more prosaic business for the head of the women, have all contributed to suppress the magical aspect

[1] See *Africa*, 1935, 4.

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of the office of the village *Sagi* and to emphasize its harmless business side instead.

Thus we find that in many Nupe villages an efficient business-like head of the women has succeeded the *Lelu* or *Sagi* of the old type. In other places, again, the people would not admit the magic significance of the woman's rank. Yet the strength of the belief, concealed though it may be, was shown in a witchcraft case which I happened to witness in Gbajibo, a small village on the Niger above Jebba. Here the *Sagi*, the very business-like head of the local women, was yet behind the public outcry against an alleged witch. The women much more than the men were leading in this persecution; they had been the first to ostracize the victim; and when I questioned them about their motives, they all referred me to the *Sagi*. Her own motive appeared to be jealousy of the other woman, the alleged witch, in whom she saw a dangerous rival, possibly even for the position of a *Sagi*.

The office of the *Sagi*, modern or traditional, is invariably a much-coveted one. Her moral hold over the women, as our example has shown, is complete. It is equally strong in the less sinister spheres of communal life: like the *Sonya* in Bida, the village *Sagi* advises the women, organizes women's work, arbitrates between them, and receives small presents from every business transaction which they carry through.

MARRIAGE AND STATUS

The ranks and offices already discussed all belong to married women. But we have seen that they represent forms of status which the women acquire in their own right, on the grounds of descent, or personal ability, or both, independent of their status as wives of men who occupy this or that social position. We shall see later that the same principle applies also to the status won by wealth. In particular the status by descent of the Nupe women is affected but little by marriage, i.e. by the social status of their husbands; in so far as it is so affected, this change is in the direction of social advancement. Women of low birth who marry above their status into the aristocracy can claim the status of their husbands; and women who marry beneath their station do not lose their status but raise their husbands to their own social level. The men will be allowed to share most of the social and political privileges of the class into which they marry. Two cases were reported to me in which the men could even acquire *saraki* ranks after marrying a woman of the *saraki* nobility. But even if the men are not admitted fully into the titled class, their children would always acquire the status of their mother. Daughters may thus inherit the status of their fathers, and both sons and daughters that of their mothers; husbands may be adopted into the social sphere of their wives and parents-in-law. This social regulation may seem surprising in an otherwise strongly patrilineal society. But this one-sided interpretation of the change of status that goes with marriage is not an expression of matrilineal kinship tendencies, nor of 'feminist' leanings in Nupe society (though we shall find ample evidence of these, too); rather it expresses political

2: Nadel
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[For information on witches, withcraft, and anti-witchcraft societies, see category 116, pp. 30, 144, 157-160, 163-197, and 201-206. --Analyst]

643 The ndakó gboyá cult for
● [754] the detection and killing of witches might not be performed in or near the town in which the *Etsu* was living, nor might anyone be put to death there. All these features, together with the ancient rule of inheritance whereby the first son born during his father's reign as *Etsu* became the heir, have disappeared, while a new background of respect for the memory of Mallam Dendo,[5] the first of the Fulani rulers of Nupe, has been created. What was once probably a divine kingship has been replaced by a system of rule by the militarily strong and the king has become *primus inter pares* among the hierarchy of rank holders.

643 The three dynasties stemming from Mallam Dendo to-day succeed to the throne
633 in strict rotation. The *Etsu* is the head of the reigning house, the *Shaba*[6] ("heir-presumptive") the head of the dynasty next in succession, and the *Kpotuŋ* the head of the third house. Bida town is divided into three sections (*eka*) each bearing the name of one of the royal dynasties and each having its own royal palace. The country around is similarly divided into three parts.

643 Every *Etsu* Nupe has sought during his reign to increase the power and wealth of his house. Former sources of income were the royal monopoly of the kola-nut trade,[7] the control of the *ndakó gboyá* anti-witchcraft society, and profits from the royal estates and from the slave trade. To-day, apart from his salary, the *Etsu* receives only profits from the royal estates and from occasional trading.

Status and Titles[8]

565 There are marked status differences in Nupe society and many symbols of social
554 distinction, such as the wearing of an indigo-blue glazed turban by the nobility, ways of greeting equals and superiors, the giving of kola-nuts (the number and quality reflecting precisely the social status of the donor and recipient), and the right to go about on horseback. Families and lineages appear to fall into class divisions according to the status in the system of ranked titles ascribed to or achieved by some of their members. While each class is, in the main, a closed group, there are opportunities for promotion within the higher classes and also some inter-class nobility, whereby entry into the higher orders may be obtained through wealth, war service, marriage, or "clientship."[9] Social ascent is controlled and marked by the hierarchy of titles. Within a grade of titles promotion to a higher title entails a reshuffle among the holders of the lower titles.

565 Of the three classes, the first, *waci* or *gitsúži* (the royal nobility) consists of the descendants of Mallam Dendo in three royal houses, Usman Zaki, Masaba, and Umaru, under their heads, *Etsu*, *Shaba*, and *Kpotuŋ*. This class is detached in origin and status from the rest of the community on account of the part it played in the wars and its position as royal fief-holders (*egba*)[10] in charge of large districts of the kingdom. The new king is elected from the *gitsúži*, every title-holder in which has in principle a chance of becoming king, though the royal prince who succeeds to the throne will generally have attained the rank of *Shaba*.[11] As well as the reshuffle of personnel holding the various titles which takes place on the death of a high title-holder and the subsequent appointment of his successor, there is a large-scale exchange of residences, younger brothers or sons moving into houses vacated by the death or promotion of their older brothers or fathers, for the residences of

[5] See above, p. 22.

[6] This office has been allowed to lapse since 1935 and the main functions have devolved upon the next in rank.

[7] i.e., the best kola-nuts grown at Labozhi.

[8] Nadel, 1942, pp. 93–103.

[9] See below, p. 35.

[10] See below, p. 36.

[11] Nadel states that only twice was a man who had not acquired the title of *Shaba* (or *Kpotuŋ* if the *Shaba* had died) made *Etsu*. Of the 41 royal titles held in 1936, 10 were held by Usman Zaki, 17 by Masaba, and 14 by Umaru, the ruling house at that time. See Nadel, 1942, pp. 95–7, for a detailed list of titles held by the various houses in 1936. Apparently new titles are often introduced.

3: Forde E-4 (no date) 1955 FF52 Nupe FF52

278 789 either with or without specified actions and utterances. Their avowed purposes are frequently therapeutic, but also include defences against theft, witchcraft, and devices to render one invisible. Nupe leech-lore includes both rational empirical cures and mystical rites which can produce no result beyond increasing the confidence of the user. Nor is there any distinction in Nupe vocabulary, for the term *cigbe* is used for all medicines. Medicines may be distinguished as those which are practically effective or may be easily taken as being effective by practitioners, and those whose objective irrationality cannot be mistaken. The latter class may include devices for rendering a man invisible, medicines for killing thieves and fending off witchcraft, and for making hoes do their work in half the normal time.

791 759 306 There are four main types of practitioners of medicine: the guild of Moslem barber-doctors, the pagan order of *cigbeciĭi*, and two kinds of individual practitioners.

The barber-doctors' guild is recognized by the *Etsu* Nupe but is confined almost entirely to the towns. The guild head occupies an important position at court. They are entirely concerned with therapeutic medicines, but are regarded with contempt in the country districts where people feel that a barber cannot know about such things.

791 789 The *cigbeciĭi*, formerly recognized by the *Etsu*, but since replaced by the barber-doctors, are much more loosely organized than the guild. Whereas the latter keep their knowledge mainly within their lineages, the *cigbeciĭi* crafts can be bought by anyone. There is little corporate activity beyond occasional gatherings at the local head's house to discuss practice. The head is traditionally responsible for all new medicines. Offerings are made to the spirits of the order and through them to *Sokó*, the ultimate source of *cigbe*, whenever a new medicine is discovered. The names of spirits may also be introduced in the application of medicines, but there appears to be no invocation. With this mystical approach there is a greater sense of the implications of "medicine" for good and for evil. While Moslem barbers, though not concerned with the more "dangerous" medicines, sell without scruple medicines for immoral purposes, such as those to induce barrenness in women, *cigbeciĭi* claim to be very particular as to whom they sell the more powerful *cigbe*. The powers of witchcraft are often said to require medicines, while the conflict between witchcraft and anti-witchcraft is sometimes represented as a struggle between good and bad *cigbe*.

Individual practitioners are of two kinds: those who provide cures for petty ailments, and Moslem mallams and scholars who write a passage from the Koran which is washed off and drunk by the patient. They also provide amulets containing Koran texts, as elsewhere in Islamic West Africa.

Some medicines, the ingredients of which are not known, belong to descent groups and are kept in vessels into which libations of beer and offerings of blood are poured to the ancestors.

754 751 The neophyte to the order of witches as imagined by the Nupe must, it is believed, bathe himself in certain medicines and observe certain taboos, and the masked dancer who impersonates and is possessed by the spirit of the anti-witchcraft society[10] uses certain medicines while others are placed on the mask to give it and its dancer their unique character. There are in addition individual medicines used as defences against magic, and ordeal medicines which will kill the witch who drinks, but leave the innocent unharmed.

Divination[11]

787 Divination plays an important part in Nupe life and is used not only to determine the rites to be performed in particular situations but to decide such matters as the election of a high officer of state. The two methods used are the old system,

[10] See below.
[11] Nadel, 1942, p. 379; 1954a, pp. 38–67.

787 widespread in West Africa, based on the patterns made by strings of shells when they are thrown, and a form of Arabic sand pattern divining performed only by Moslem "teachers."

Shell divination (*eba*) is similar in technique to Yoruba *ifa*, and is practised mainly in the villages and pagan districts. The diviner's apparatus consists of the divining strings themselves and a series of marked slabs which serve as a key for interpreting the throws. He receives a small fee—money, rice, or kola-nuts—each time he is consulted, but these payments are regarded as "gifts," and diviners cannot live on what they earn in this way. Most of them are also farmers and some are medicine experts at the same time. The skill is only incidentally hereditary in a family and is generally learned from an expert, payment being made for tuition.

Sand divination (*hati*) is an even more thoroughly learned skill than *eba*, though its performance is less dramatic. The craft can only be acquired by mallams, i.e., men who have at least some rudiments of Moslem learning. The various signs are drawn with the finger-tips on sand smoothed out on the ground. The "key" is carried in the diviner's head, though there is a book on divination written in Arabic which some diviners possess but which they do not consult when actually divining. *Hati* diviners are of widely differing status and learning, but in general the more scholarly mallams do not engage in divination and diviners are often men who have been unsuccessful as mallams.

Witchcraft

● 754 The Nupe conceive of witchcraft (*ega*) as a supernatural power by which people can be possessed; they then use it for evil and anti-social purposes. It is believed to be practised mainly by women; male witches are said to be "good" people, who would curb the evil desires of the female witches, though the killing of the victim is thought to be the work of both sexes in "partnership."

A witch (*gaci*) is thought to belong to an organization (*ena gaciši*) whose head is known as *lelu*. This title used to be officially bestowed by the Nupe chiefs on a woman who was believed to be the most powerful witch in the village. Her secret knowledge could then be used for the benefit of the community. The equivalent title today is that of *sagi*,[12] although a change in the significance of the rank has taken place and the *sagi* is now concerned with more prosaic business.

The powers of a witch are not hereditary but a witch may pass them on to her child by feeding it on witchcraft *cigbe*. A person desiring to become a witch may also approach anyone known to be one and thus gain entry into the circle of witches, or may buy a witchcraft medicine.

Witchcraft is believed capable of making its possessor invisible and of enabling her to recognize other witches; a witch is thought to be fully conscious of her secret powers and does not act against her will. Witches attack people at night when they are asleep and feed on the life force (*rayi*) causing them to fall ill and waste away. Only rarely are they thought to spirit away the body itself.[13]

There are two methods of combating witchcraft. One, applied to individual cases and when a definite person is suspected, consists of an ordeal or other test of guilt, whereupon the witch is heavily fined and expelled from the village. The other is effected through the activities of the *ndakó gboyá*, a "secret" but officially recognized anti-witchcraft society which is applied only when a large-scale outbreak of witchcraft is believed to have occurred. The head of the society (*Majin Dodo*) comes from a particular lineage of Kusogi Danci, a small riverain village. Initiations take place here, the training lasting five years. Initiates are said to be able to make spirits materialize and to exercise control over witches. Paraphernalia associated with the society include a medicine for ritual washing, a white cloth mask on a pole, and magical objects for producing rain, etc., including the chain of

[12] See above, p. 41.
[13] Nadel, 1935c; 1942, pp. 146–9; 1954a, pp. 163–87.

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754 Tsoede which links the society to the paramount political authority of the country. Some of these become the property of the initiate and are kept in a shrine in his compound, where they become the centre of a general magical cult performed annually.

The society holds a special ceremony in which masked dancers[14] single out alleged witches and take them into the bush for ordeals, where, it is said, victims are killed unless they are able to buy their freedom. The ceremony is never performed in Bida town but produces much social and economic disorganization elsewhere. It is unknown among some groups, such as the Ebe and Dibo. It was formerly controlled by the Fulani Emirs who shared the proceeds with initiates, but this exploitation of the society was ended in 1921, when it was forbidden in what was then Nupe Province. It still functions in Pategi Emirate and in small remote villages in Bida Emirate, where it sometimes takes the form of a spectacular display at festival times. A form of *ndakó gboyá*, under the Hausa name of *magiro*, is found among the Kamberi, Kamuku, Gbari, and other tribes in the north of Niger Province. Among the Gbari, however, it seems to be connected with the cult of the ancestral spirits.[15]

[14] The mask consists of a long tube of white cotton cloth suspended from a wheel-shaped bamboo frame fixed to the top of a pole about 12 feet high; the man representing the spirit stands inside the cloth tube, which comes down to the ground, and holds the pole in his hands. The *ndakó gboyá* masks are unlike any others used in the cults of Nigerian peoples.

[15] Nadel, 1954a, pp. 188–201; Glasson, 1937 (?)